

Statistical bulletin

Trust in government, UK: 2022

Trust in government and institutions, opinions of public services and attitudes toward political issues. UK-specific results. Experimental Statistics.

Contact:
Matthew Lelii
publicservicesanalysis@ons.gov.
uk
+44 1633 456921

Release date:
13 July 2022

Next release:
To be announced

Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Trust in government](#)
3. [Public services](#)
4. [Political participation and attitudes](#)
5. [Data](#)
6. [Glossary](#)
7. [Measuring the data](#)
8. [Related links](#)

1 . Main points

- 35% of the UK population stated that they trusted the national government, which is lower than the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average (41%).
- 42% of the population reported that they trusted local government and 55% trusted the Civil Service.
- Trust in public services was higher than trust in the national or local governments, with the NHS the most trusted public service (80%), followed by the courts and legal system (68%).
- 75% of the population believed that the UK government should place a higher priority on creating conditions for businesses to thrive, 64% said they should place higher priority on reducing climate change and 54% believe they should place higher priority on reducing the national debt.

2 . Trust in government

The UK Trust in Government Survey is a part of an international study commissioned and coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The survey looks at people's trust in governments and institutions, opinions about public services and attitudes towards political issues. The Cabinet Office asked the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to undertake the survey on behalf of the UK and the fieldwork took place in March 2022. This bulletin focuses on the results of the UK survey, which included all the OECD survey questions and additional UK-focussed questions. The [OECD have published their own report](#), which looks at the results across all participating countries.

Three-quarters (75%) of the UK population reported that they are trusting of most other people, higher than the average among the OECD countries who participated in the survey (67%). One-third (35%) of the UK population reported that they trust their national government, lower than the average across the OECD countries (41%). Half (49%) of the UK population said they did not trust the national government. UK respondents were asked specifically about their trust in the UK Government rather than any of the devolved Governments in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Figure 1: UK people are more trusting of other people than of the government, relative to other OECD countries

International comparison of the levels of trust in people and governments, OECD countries, 2021 to 2022

Notes:

1. Levels of trust were reported on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".
2. The "trust" category represents scores of 6 to 10.
3. To see the results for each of the participating countries in the OECD trust survey, please see the [OECD report](#).

Download the data

[.xlsx](#)

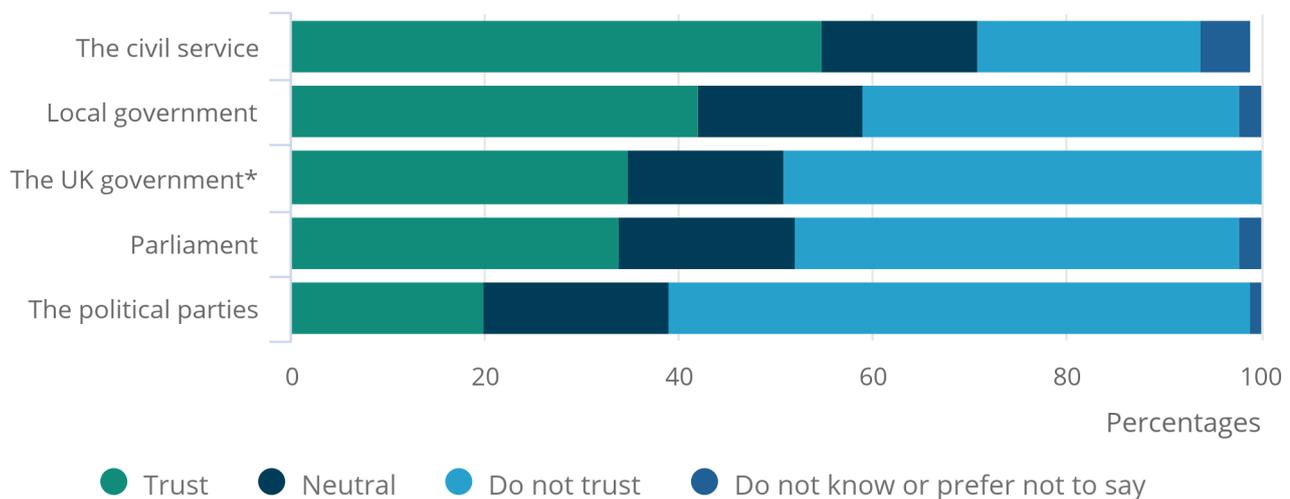
Levels of trust in political and administrative institutions varied (Figure 2). Only one in five (20%) of the UK population reported trust in the political parties, while more than half (55%) reported that they trust the Civil Service.

Figure 2: Levels of trust in government varied by type of institution

Levels of trust, UK, March 2022

Figure 2: Levels of trust in government varied by type of institution

Levels of trust, UK, March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics - Trust in Government Survey, March 2022

Notes:

1. Levels of trust were reported on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".
2. The "trust" category represents scores of 6 to 10, "neutral" represents scores of 5 and "do not trust" represents scores of 0 to 4.
3. The category "Do not know or prefer not to say" for the UK government is based on a sample size of less than 30, so should be treated with caution. This is marked with an asterisk (*).
4. Values may not add to 100% owing to rounding.

Drivers of trust

The OECD has identified five drivers that can influence trust: integrity, responsiveness, reliability, openness, and fairness. Three questions were asked for each of the five drivers, where respondents were asked how likely they thought it was that scenarios based on these drivers of trust would happen in the UK. The full results of these questions can be found in our accompanying dataset. Some of the questions, which show larger differences between the UK results and the OECD averages, are referenced below.

Openness

The majority of the UK population (78%) thought it was likely that they would easily find information about administrative procedures (for example, obtaining a passport or applying for benefits), higher than the OECD average of 65%.

Additionally, half of the UK population (50%) felt it was likely that they would have an opportunity to voice their views if a decision affecting the community were to be made by the local government, higher than the OECD average of 41%.

Fairness

More than two-thirds (68%) felt it was likely that their application for a benefit or service would be treated fairly, compared with the OECD average of 59%.

Reliability

Just over half (57%) of the UK population thought it was likely that government institutions would be prepared to protect people's lives if a new serious contagious disease spreads, compared with the OECD average of 49%. To note, this survey took place in March 2022, two years after the first lockdowns were implemented in the UK in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Responsiveness

Less than one-third (30%) of the UK population thought it was likely that a national policy would be changed if the majority of people expressed a view against it, lower than the OECD average of 36%. Half (51%) of the UK population thought a change was unlikely, compared with an OECD average of 40%.

Around one-third (34%) felt it was likely that a public service that was working badly would be improved if many people complained, lower than the OECD average (40%). Around half (49%) thought it was unlikely the service would be improved, compared with an OECD average of 38%.

Integrity

One-quarter (25%) of the UK population thought that a high-level politician would likely refuse a well-paid job in the private sector in exchange for granting a political favour, lower than the OECD average of 30%. Nearly two-thirds (62%) thought it was unlikely they would refuse, compared with an OECD average of 48%.

Associations between trust and drivers of trust

This section explores how the responses to the drivers of trust scenarios (as explained above) are associated with the overall level of trust in the UK government and the Civil Service. In particular, the scenario which has the largest variation in mean trust score when comparing responses that said a scenario was likely or unlikely, has been identified. See [Section 7: Measuring the data](#) for more information on how mean scores were calculated.

UK government

Of all fifteen scenarios, differences in opinion about the reliability of business conditions resulted in the largest variation in trust scores for the UK government. Of those who thought it likely that business conditions government can influence would be stable and predictable, the mean trust score for the UK government was 5.5 out of 10. Of those who thought that stability and predictability was unlikely, the mean score was 2.5.

Civil Service

Differences in opinion about the responsiveness of public services had the largest variation in trust scores for the Civil Service. Of those who thought it likely that a public agency would adopt an innovative idea that could improve a public service, the mean trust score for the Civil Service was 6.7 out of 10. Of those who thought it unlikely, the mean score was 4.7.

3 . Public services

As part of the UK Trust in Government study, additional questions were asked regarding public services, which were not explored in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study. As a result, in the following sections comparisons between the UK and the OECD average are not always available. The scope of each public service is defined within the data reference tables.

Use of public services

The majority (80%) of the UK population reported that they had used the NHS themselves in the last 12 months. Smaller proportions had accessed other public services; the police (11%), education (14%) and social services (3%). Nearly one-third (29%) reported that either they or their child had been enrolled in an educational institution in the last two years.

Trust and satisfaction with public services

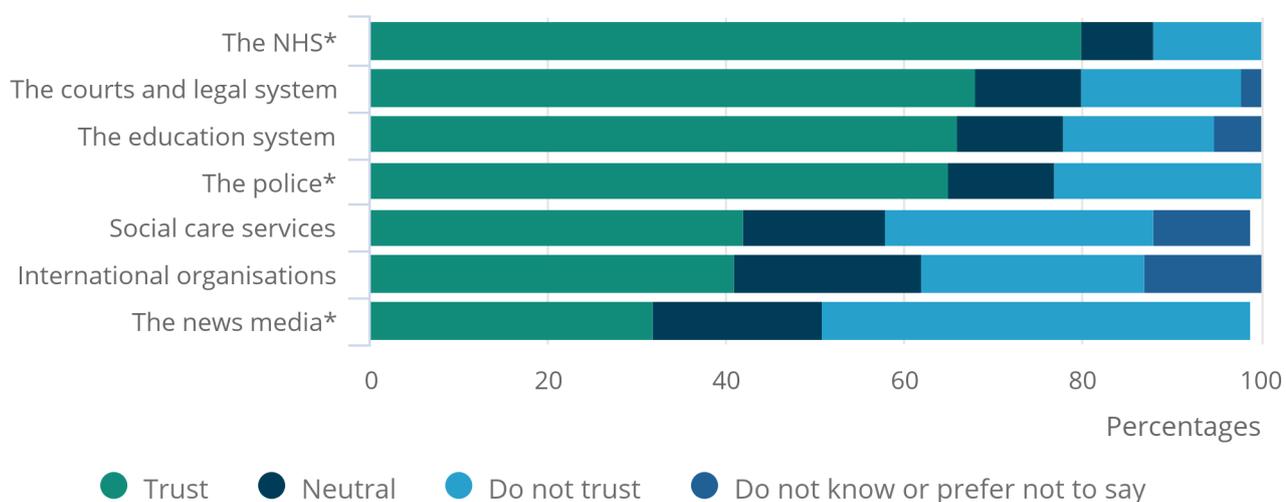
Respondents were asked separately about their trust and satisfaction in each public service. Levels of trust in public services were higher than those for government and political institutions (see [Section 2: Trust in government](#)). The public service with the highest level of trust was the NHS (80%), followed by the courts and legal system (68%).

Figure 3: High levels of trust were reported for the NHS

Levels of trust in public institutions, UK, March 2022

Figure 3: High levels of trust were reported for the NHS

Levels of trust in public institutions, UK, March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics - Trust in Government Survey, March 2022

Notes:

1. Levels of trust were reported on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".
2. The "trust" category represents scores of 6 to 10, "neutral" represents scores of 5 and "do not trust" represents scores of 0 to 4.
3. For the NHS, the police and the news media, the category "Do not know or prefer not to say" is based on a sample size of less than 30, so should be treated with caution. These are marked with an asterisk (*).
4. Values may not add to 100% owing to rounding.

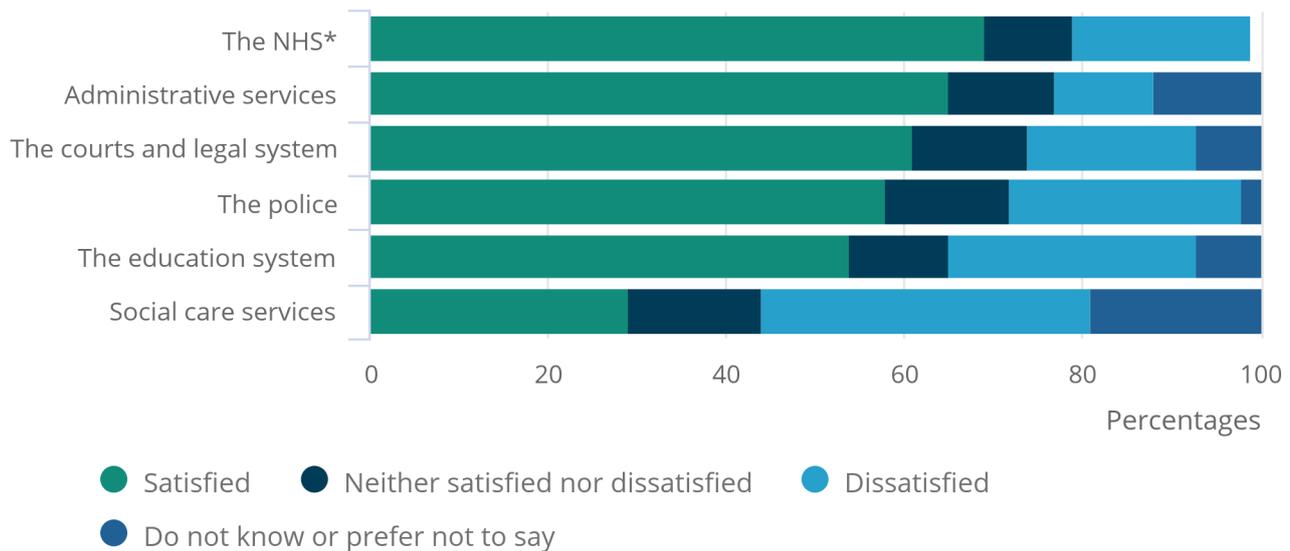
More than half of the UK population were satisfied with the country's public services, with the exception of social care services. More than two-thirds (69%) reported being satisfied with the NHS (the public service with the highest satisfaction score), higher than the OECD average for their respective health services (62%).

Figure 4: High levels of satisfaction were reported for the NHS

Levels of satisfaction in public institutions, UK, March 2022

Figure 4: High levels of satisfaction were reported for the NHS

Levels of satisfaction in public institutions, UK, March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics - Trust in Government Survey, March 2022

Notes:

1. Levels of satisfaction were reported on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is "not at all satisfied" and 10 is "completely satisfied".
2. The "satisfied" category represents scores of 6 to 10, "neutral" represents scores of 5 and "dissatisfied" represents scores of 0 to 4.
3. The category "Do not know or prefer not to say" for the NHS is based on a sample size of less than 30, so should be treated with caution. This is marked with an asterisk (*).
4. Values may not add to 100% owing to rounding.

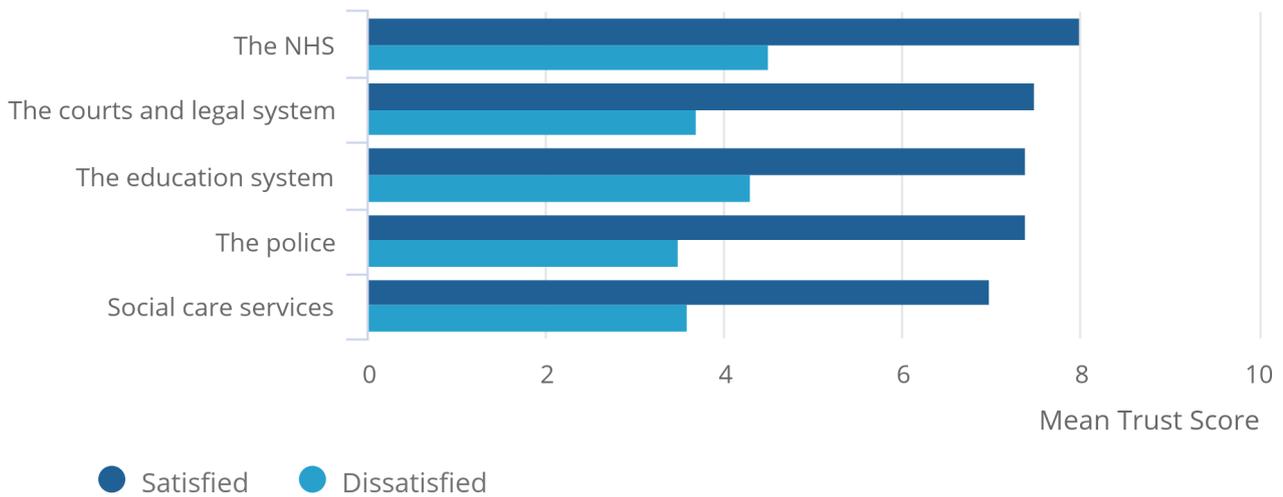
Trust in public institutions was associated with the level of satisfaction in those institutions (Figure 5). The police saw the largest variation in trust scores between those who were satisfied and dissatisfied with the service. Of those who reported that they were satisfied with the police in the UK, the average trust score for the police was 7.4. Of those who were dissatisfied with the police, the average score was 3.5. See [Section 7: Measuring the data](#) for more information on how mean scores were calculated.

Figure 5: High levels of trust were associated with high levels of satisfaction with public services

Trust scores for people satisfied and dissatisfied with public services, UK, March 2022

Figure 5: High levels of trust were associated with high levels of satisfaction with public services

Trust scores for people satisfied and dissatisfied with public services, UK, March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics - Trust in Government Survey, March 2022

Notes:

1. Levels of trust and satisfaction were reported on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely".
2. The "satisfied" category represents satisfaction scores of 6 to 10 and "dissatisfied" represents satisfaction scores of 0 to 4.

4 . Political participation and attitudes

Political participation

Half (49%) of the UK population felt confident in their ability to participate in politics, higher than the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average (41%). The majority (82%) of people had participated in at least one political activity in the last 12 months. On average, respondents had participated in two political activities. Most people reported signing a petition (57%) or voting in the last local election (56%).

The majority (58%) of the population were not confident that people like them have a say in what the UK government does. Over one-third (36%) were not confident in their own ability to participate in politics.

Table 1: Political activities in the last 12 months, UK, March 2022

	Percentage reporting participation
Signed a petition, including an e-mail or online petition	57
Voted in last local or municipal election (if there were any)	56
Boycotted certain products for political reasons	27
Contacted a politician, government or local government official	22
Provided input or feedback on government policy, law or document	18
Posted or forwarded political content on social media	18
Worn or displayed a campaign badge or sticker	7
Attended a meeting of a trade union, political party or political action group	5
Taken part in a public demonstration	4
Participated in a Citizen Assembly, Citizen Dialogue or Citizen Jury*	1
None of these	18

Source: Office for National Statistics - Trust in Government Survey, March 2022

Notes

1. The category "Participated in a Citizen Assembly, Citizen Dialogue or Citizen Jury" is based on a sample size of less than 30, so should be treated with caution. This is marked with an asterisk (*).
2. Respondents were able to select more than one option. Therefore, percentages will not sum to 100%.

Long-term policies and global challenges

Most of the UK population felt that the UK government should prioritise businesses and workers more (Figure 6). Three-quarters (75%) wanted more priority placed upon creating conditions for businesses to thrive. Around two-thirds thought that helping workers adapt to new technologies and providing equal opportunities for all should be prioritised (66% and 64%, respectively).

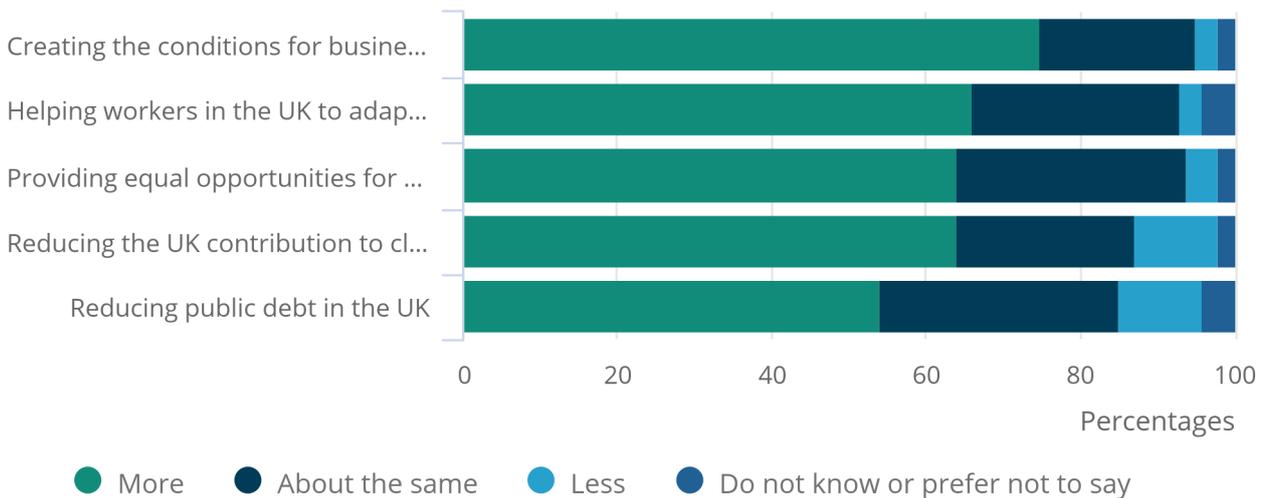
While two-thirds (64%) of the UK population felt that reducing the UK's contribution to climate change should be more of a priority of the government, one in ten (11%) said it should be less of a priority for the UK government.

Figure 6: People favoured more priority given to creating favourable business conditions and helping workers

Issues the UK government should prioritise more, about the same, or less, UK, March 2022

Figure 6: People favoured more priority given to creating favourable business conditions and helping workers

Issues the UK government should prioritise more, about the same, or less, UK, March 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics - Trust in Government Survey, March 2022

Two-thirds (66%) felt that the UK government should prioritise joining forces with other governments internationally to better tackle global challenges. The majority (75%) chose climate change as one of the top three issues they believe is best addressed by working with other countries rather than by the UK alone. A minority (16%) agree that existing international agreements are sufficient to solve long-term issues facing humanity (such as migration and climate change) and around one-quarter (27%) were not at all confident that the UK will succeed in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the next 10 years.

5 . Data

[Trust in Government UK data](#)

Dataset | Released 13 July 2022

Indicators from the Trust in Government Survey to monitor people's trust across different institutions and levels of government. The dataset includes data on drivers of trust, political attitudes, political participation and satisfaction with public services.

[Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\) Trust in Government](#)

OECD study | Released 13 July 2022

The OECD have published a report covering the international results of the study. Data are available through their data portal.

6 . Glossary

Civil Service

Non-elected government employees at central or local levels of government.

Climate change

Climate change is the long-term shift in average weather patterns across the world. Since the mid-1800s, humans have contributed to the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the air. This causes global temperatures to rise, resulting in long-term changes to the climate.

UK Government

The UK government consists of the Prime Minister, their Cabinet and junior ministers, supported by the teams of non-political civil servants that work in government departments.

7 . Measuring the data

This release contains data from the Trust in Government survey. The survey was undertaken by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on behalf of the Cabinet Office and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The survey was completed online between 11 and 27 March 2022. In a small number of cases (less than 0.2%) the respondent completed the survey over the telephone with an ONS Telephone Operator.

Sampling and weighting

A total of 4,071 adults (aged 18 years or over) living in the UK were sampled and invited to complete the survey. These were selected from those who had previously completed the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (those living in Great Britain) or the European Health Interview Survey (those living in Northern Ireland). The responding sample was 3,162 individuals, representing a 78% response rate.

Survey weights were applied to make estimates representative of the population.

More quality and methodology information on strengths and limitations, appropriate uses and how the data were created is available in our accompanying [Trust in Government Quality and Methodology Information \(QMI\)](#).

Uncertainty

View more information on [how we measure and communicate uncertainty for our surveys](#).

Experimental Statistics

Data in this release are [Experimental Statistics](#). The data collection methodology used is new and is therefore subject to further evaluation and modification.

Average trust and satisfaction scores

Trust and satisfaction questions are answered on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being "not at all" and 10 being "completely". There is also an option for respondents to answer, "don't know" and on some questions, "prefer not to say". Average trust and satisfaction scores represent the mean score for all respondents who gave an answer between 0 and 10. This is the sum of all scores, divided by the number of respondents.

8 . Related links

[Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\) Trust in Government](#)

OECD study | Released 13 July 2022

The report and methodology of the wider international study of OECD countries on Trust in Government.

[Trust in Government Survey QMI](#)

Methodology | Released 13 July 2022

Quality and Methodology Information (QMI) for the Trust in Government Survey, detailing strengths and limitations of the data, methods used, and data uses and users.